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## **Question Time: New Harper Lee novel**

**'Mockingbird' follow-up announced**

**By Rob Burgess**  
**Tribune night editor**

[**Editor's note:** To participate in future queries, keep an eye on our Twitter and Facebook accounts.]

Since the novel, "To Kill a Mockingbird," was published in 1960, more than 30 million copies have been sold. During the past 65 years, author Harper Lee has stayed out of the limelight, granting very few interviews. Lee shocked everyone Tuesday by announcing the upcoming publication of her long-awaited second novel, "Go Set a Watchman," scheduled for release this summer. Pre-orders for the book quickly sent it to the top of the charts on Amazon.com. Questions arose, however, regarding the 88-year-old author's participation with the project.

"Amid concerns that Harper Lee was not involved in the decision to publish a second novel, HarperCollins issued a statement relayed by her attorney," reported The Associated Press Thursday. "In the statement given to the publisher by Lee's attorney, Tonja Carter, the author says 'she is alive and kicking and happy as hell with the reactions of 'Watchman.'" ... The publisher has acknowledged that they haven't dealt directly with Lee on the

new book, but communicated with her through Carter and literary agent Andrew Nurnberg.”

So, we wanted to know: “What was your reaction to this news?”

### **Your answers**

“Just that I need to reread ‘To Kill a Mockingbird!’ It’s been at least 10 years.” — **Elliebeth Russell**

“Great.” — **Brenda Johnson Fite**

“Somebody other than Miss Lee is trying to make money off it.” — **Kenneth Birkemeier**

“How do I get an advanced copy?” — **Monica Stark**

### **Our answers**

“‘I thought she was dead.’ That was the very first thought that entered my head.” — **Mark Saluke**

“I’m sure a 60-year-old unpublished first draft will be amazing. I’m just eager to devour the ludicrous fan fiction this will spawn. Maybe Scout meets a time traveling Capt. Kirk and his buddy, Arwen.” — **Steve Mullen**

“To be honest, my first thought when I heard the news was, ‘you mean Harper Lee is still alive?’ But I’m considering adding the forthcoming novel

to my reading list. I appreciated the story of her first book and how it painted the injustice of racism without allowing that injustice to overwhelm the power and poignancy of the narrative itself. I'm hoping the sequel maintains that commitment to storytelling.” — **Sarah Einselen**

“I always thought she and J.D. Salinger had the best writing careers: drop one classic and out. I'll be interested to see how it's received. Following up the most important novel of the 20th Century will be difficult! It seems impossible to live up to such high expectations. As far as her attachment to the project, it is potentially troubling. The situation is complicated by the fact that she is speaking through her lawyer and she has been in poor health for a long time. Lee has been successfully avoiding the media for over a half century, so perhaps this is just par for the course. At least, I hope so. If she had already died and this was happening I would be much more suspicious. (See the post-death releases of Tupac Shakur for an example of what this brand of exploitation looks like.) Whatever happens I'll definitely read this novel, though.” — **Rob Burgess**

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